

Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee  
Conference Room 1 7:30 PM Memorial Building Framingham, Ma

Minutes

March 21, 2006

**Note:** If a word or sentence is blue and underlined click for the link.

**Note: A tape recording of these minutes is available upon request**

Attendance: Bob Berman, Yaakov Cohn, Dawn Harkness, Cynthia Laurora., Laurie Lee, Wes Ritchie, Nick Sanchez, Steve Orr absent; John Speranza, Jim Palmer

**Minutes: No action**

**Discussion of Forum**

Bob Berman said that notice has gone out and he has heard from several people that they will come and speak. He expects this forum to be similar to the first forum where we allow people to make presentations to us. He will allow more back and forth discussion because these are town officials we will be speaking with.

Nick thought the idea of this particular meeting was to allow town officials to hear from us what we have done and what we have found out.

He thought the draft the clerk prepared, although long, could be used to make a presentation: the executive summary would work will.

He realizes some people have found faults with the report but we could have two presentations. The clerk could present the data found, and she should not include any type of conclusions, and then maybe someone else, perhaps Wes could make a presentation as well. He is willing to make it a motion. Maybe a little later.

Bob said he would have lots of questions about what he is talking about: what would Wes be reporting on?

Nick has heard that Wes did not like some of the ideas in the draft, so maybe Laurie could make a presentation and Wes he either be critical or supportive of the draft.

Nick thought that we are getting to the end of the process and he suspects we will not come to a consensus. Since this is the case, town officials need to listen to both sides of the issue and this is a good opportunity for them to do that.

Dawn also has serious concerns about the draft report and its inaccuracies and its slant. She would not support Wes taking a position in two days to present a presentation that would articulate concerns on this. Her concern is to read it more in depth. We aren't ready to present anything to town officials. If the forum is to receive questions and explain methodologies, that is appropriate. In terms of presenting findings or conclusions, it is too premature.

Steve was confused about the comment of methodologies.

Laurie said that the motion that we voted on and the announcement out since January which included the three forums, called for a discussion of the findings of the committee and a potential draft report. The actual motion passed was to present findings to date to

town officials. We have been working on this for a long time. She said that she might have pulled this together but it wasn't just her. It was a lot of people's hard work. She said we have to preset something

Bob does not consider this packet as a report, but rather a big clump of information. He thinks of a report, this is not it.

How would we ever find the time to present this, he isn't sure.

Laurie said she can summarize this into 30 minutes, just highlighting some of the data we found. This is what we said we will do.

Dawn said she is right. When this was proposed in January, she thought we would have had time to discuss and debate this. What's happened instead, is the majority of the group presents information and there is little debate and a vote is taken and it is considered a fact. Regardless of whether there has been any discussion of methodology or any real testing of it. The property report for example. That data is so skewed and inaccurate and so slanted. We have not had a chance to discuss it or debate it. It was rammed through this committee; we were going to accept it without any discussion. Before we present these things to town meeting we should re-visit these issues. That is apparently not going to happen. She doesn't know why she should be surprised by this, in fact she is not surprised. It is a disservice to town meeting, it is a disservice to this committee to try to present that what we thought we might be able to accomplish in January at this point when we have just gotten this report last week.

Cynthia was surprised at the previous speaker's surprise. She feels that she has been sitting here since August, and every week we have had information presented to us, we voted on it we discuss it, argue, weight the pros and cons throw some out... we've accepted some things, and here we are towards the end in March and all the things in this report have been accepted by the committee. No conclusions have been drawn. This is just raw data; facts, figures, methodologies is explained. She doesn't understand where the problem is.

Bob corrected that he is not sure all the things have been approved

Dawn said **they are not. Not even close.**

Wes said that along those lines, there a lot of this stuff is irrelevant to what we are doing. But a lot of you have decided to go forth and did it anyway. He has major reservations about this report. He got so many calls this week about this report and what it means. He says it is a collection of facts, it is not a report ugh, and that all it is. Ugh. That is all I have to say.

Cynthia asked Wes who called him.

He said people in the community. As well as reporters, saying what about this report? Do you believe what is in here? Do you support this? What about all this crime you alluded to: property values you alluded to?

He said we have not established a connection to social services for a lot of this data. This is just cool to know.

This has nothing to do with, **in** Wes's opinion, with our charge

Nick said that the point is this:

We disagree on the value of the data

We disagree on the methodologies

We will certainly disagree on the conclusions

Therefore the time has come to present both sides to town meeting. He assures the previous speaker that his criticisms of the data and methodologies, **Nick thinks**, are very weak.

**Therefore the time has come to** accept the fact that we are divided and need to present different points of view. That is precisely why Wes should present this because he has spoken very strongly to the media already.

Steve said minority reports are common.

Bob said, we have two days to come to an agreement on a minority report?

Cynthia asked, if some people don't agree with the information, why haven't they worked to disprove this data. We have had 8 months to do this. We need to have a report in April and she doesn't see anything to the opposing point

Cynthia said she wants to know why all along they haven't come in with other information disputing the data in this report? This has all been introduced week after week. There is certainly some background data put in here that has not been presented but it is just put in here to give context. Most other things were introduced. Why haven't you presented other information contradicting what is in here?

Dawn commented that for example, let's remember the property report. We got that report on the evening of a meeting. We had 15 -20 minutes to discuss it and a member said that for psychological reasons he wanted us to vote to accept the report. He did not want to discuss and debate the numbers. He wanted us to take a vote immediately and accept the report. There was no interest in having a discussion, there was no interest in hearing any kind of debate on why these numbers don't add up this way. The vote was forced through and that was the end of the discussion. We have been waiting for the moment when we are going to put together the report because the majority has rammed things through the committee without adequate review or suggestions and that is what a previous speaker has suggested. He doesn't care. His position is this committee is divided. You don't need to hear our information. You write your report and we will write ours. That is all that matters. That is the kind of intellectual debate that we have had in this committee all the time.

Bob agreed with the previous speaker on many of her statements except we didn't receive the report that night. We got it a week before, the end of the week. We had 5-6 days with it. There was a little bit of discussion. He didn't feel he had time to go through the report and ask the questions he would now after looking at it for a few months.

Dawn stood corrected.

Cynthia commented that she remembered the property and income group proposed a survey of realtors; we discussed it quite extensively and even though she disagreed we scrapped it because of objections and did this other study, There has been a lot of give and take. Don't you agree?"

Dawn disagreed. She said she is wrong.

Cynthia said the majority could have voted that in but they did not. This other report was as black and white as you can get.

Nick said. The particular property report: weeks and weeks have gone by and we have not seen anything but still criticisms. It is the duty of some people who feel the data is incorrect or the approach is incorrect, to come up with alternatives. He has requested many, many times, issues of what have we learned from the education committee, other issues; the AMR, that is still not done.

Dawn said of course it is.

Nick was surprised. He didn't see it.

He said the idea that the role of some committee members is to present work and the role of the other committee members is to criticize that work is not constructive.

We are divided. That is a fact. No one in this town would dispute that. Given those facts, we have to come up with two presentations.

He honestly, did not fully agree with the entire draft report. There are some problems.

But it is the best we can do, given the limitations we have self imposed.

If anyone else has anything else to say they should say it loud and clear.

Others have had time, weeks and weeks, to make formal presentations and there hasn't been anything.

Steve commented that Dawn sent the ambulance stuff and Nick's copy did not get through.

Dawn said she sent out the ambulance information in December. The study was done in two weeks of it being sent out. And again this week.

Laurie asked if this is what she received via email because she was confused. Was there an analysis or just all the raw data?

Dawn said it was the entire correspondence between AMR and her. Laurie requested it in electronic format and Dawn asked them for that. She sent it to the clerk in its entirety as she received it.

Laurie said that the agreement of the sub committee was that Dawn was going to analyze that data. It was a listing of all addresses in Framingham.

Dawn said the raw data was there. There was also a report in there. AMR answered all questions unlike our town departments, even if it wasn't applicable. They answered every question.

That is the report. Look at it and read it.

**Nick moved that Thursday the Clerk, Laurie Lee, be given 30 minutes to make a presentation with the information accumulated. And an equal amount of time be**

**given to any member or group of members, to make a counter presentation or present different data or interpretation.**  
**Second**

Lloyd Kaye from the audience said he is vice chair of CDC, he sat on four different committees EDIC, 126/35...He has never experienced what goes on in here on any of those committees. He has watched the last couple of meetings and this report was just handed out and it was said that two weeks were needed to go over it. He commented that he is going to be there Thursday night. He doesn't expect this report to be presented to any town officials or the public in any way shape or form without everybody on the board reviewing it in full and voting on it. It is irresponsible to the people in this town and the other appointed people. This would be unheard of on his committee if it isn't thoroughly discussed. He was watching and facts have changed. He spoke to the assessor and facts have changed. He wants this board to discuss this and then come to the appointed people. He does not want to see four different presentations.

Dawn spoke against the motion. She thought it was ridiculous that we would spend less time analyzing the data than discussing each of the questions in the questionnaires. It just seems more of the same of what we have been experiencing. A majority of this committee is not interested in intellectual exercise of discussing what do these numbers mean. What is the connection of any of the facts that we have come up with to the role of SSA's. We spent weeks on the school and SSA questionnaire. The majority is unwilling to engage in that exercise to these findings.

Wes spoke against the motion. He would have considered it if it came up a week ago. Two days is not enough time to speak on the problems with this. Out of respect for the minority he hopes we vote this down.

Bob also spoke against the motion. It puts the community into a bad situation because they are not going to get the information they should get in a well put together manner.

Bob added an amendment to the motion that the vice chair of this committee will run the meeting

Steve said that we are only presenting raw data, findings. Not making interpretations. There is nothing wrong with the raw data. Does anyone think there is anything wrong. Dawn said Yes. Bob said yes. Wes said significantly.

Nick said that is precisely the point. Since people have felt that way for a long time, that there is problems with the raw data, he doesn't buy into the argument that people haven't had time.

Bob said he doesn't remember us talking about data that singles out the three largest agencies in the town. Town counsel warned us against doing that. By this data they make so much more money than all the other agencies in the other towns.. This is nothing we have discussed or seen prior to getting this a week ago Thursday and to present this.

We did have a discussion last weeks about having two weeks to go through this. He didn't hear a lot of complaints about that. There were opportunities to talk about it. I can go through this.

Bob continued. Financial facts about Framingham. Absolutely no relevance to what we are doing to finding out the impact of social services in the town of Framingham. Framingham police department, yearly arrests. No relevance, because there is no connection made at all with social services in Framingham, None. There are lots of examples like that. I don't think we agreed, voted to approve the police data either. I don't think we have voted or had a logical discussion on it.

Lloyd Kaye from the audience asked are you talking about their gross revenue or net profit? There is a huge difference.

Bob didn't know, he didn't have time to look at this.

Cynthia said gross revenue. That is their total budget: grants, contracts.

Bob said that given that one of the minority members is in the hospital he doesn't think it is possible to put together a report in two days. He said he is sure there will not be two reports. Nor do they agree on most things. There will only be one report.

Laurie asked Bob what data does he agree with?

Bob said that has its own agenda. Let's figure out what we are going to do Thursday night.

Dawn commented none of it (inaudible)

Nick said that he honestly doesn't think this is the time to answer some of your concerns with the data. For example, you state categorically that some of the data is irrelevant. Well it is relevant to some members of the committee. What I find really fascinating is that to other members of the committee that find it irrelevant, I have no problem with that. But why are these individuals trying to convince me that the data is not relevant, when I know that it is relevant?

Also I am really fascinated by the fact that there has been limited statistical understanding on the part of some members, for example when we talked about control groups.

Nick continued. We are divided. The only way to come together is to go ahead and present the data that you feel is relevant, at the appropriate time. When you feel it is relevant. You have had all of these months to gather all of the data that you think is relevant. I think some of us have had the time to gather data that we feel is relevant, and so everybody should be given equal time. If they do not accept to have the floor, that is fine. I think that will speak to the issue that there are individuals who have served on this committee for a long time and they have not been able to come up with their own data that seems to contradict the data that has been presented.

Nick then seconded Bob's motion.

Bob Berman said he thinks it is interesting that the previous speaker basically makes the same points that I would have made on limited statistical understanding. It is interesting

that he chose to use an explanation of, there was a group that was looking for data that they felt was relevant, and I think it clearly shows. And I think that was an understanding at the beginning of this whole time that that was not going to be the case; that we were going to look at all data, and as a group were going to go through the data and come up with some observations. Now to date we have not done that. Now one side is apparently ready to go ahead and finish up.

Dawn said that she is not entirely sure that we do disagree with every single piece of data but the only way we will know is if we go through it, page by page. Discuss it. Just like we did with the questionnaires. Just like all other committees do. They go through it and discuss it, what they agree on or not, and that is where you come up with a minority report.

Dawn continued that she envisioned the process to be like other committees she has been on. That is not how it works here. The majority just votes the way they want to vote and do not want to process the information They do not want to discuss it or debate it and it just doesn't matter .Process didn't matter and it doesn't matter now either.

Cynthia disagreed that there hasn't been discussion and debate. She has sat here week after week and there has been discussion and debate to beat the band. Our final report is due in April . When are we going to finish all this. We have been covering this week after week. We are at the end. We thought we would be finished by March and do our report in April. We have had a serious timeline and not all committees have worked like we have. The town is waiting for the information. The elected officials were going to receive a preview and that is what we have agreed to. This information is not new. It has been discussed time and time again since we started doing the research.

Steve thought Cynthia hit it perfectly

**Motion: Nick moved that Thursday the Clerk, Laurie Lee, be given 30 minutes to make a presentation based on the report and the executive summary. And an equal amount of time be given to any member or group of members, to make a counter presentation or present problems with the presentation.**

**Amendment :Yaakov runs meeting**

**5 favor 1 opposed 2 abstain**

**Motion**

**Vote**

**4 in favor 3 opposed 1 abstain**

**Bob said that at this point he entertains a motion to adjourn**

**Dawn moves to adjourn**

**Second**

Yaakov asked if we could discuss the draft. He said that even though we voted to give a presentation doesn't mean we can't hear specific points and review the information and get suggestions.

**Bob asked for vote**  
**3 in favor 2 opposed 2 abstain**  
**Laurie Lee , Clerk**